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## Charting the Capitol Interim Report - November 2015

### Getting Prepped for 2016

The Colorado League of Charter Schools' Policy & Advocacy Team has been hard at work since the legislative session ended in the spring. With the 2016 General Assembly already less than two months away - below is an update on some of our efforts since May.

We will return to regular distribution of this newsletter in January. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to reach out to any members of our team (contact information included at the bottom of this email) should you have any questions or concerns.

### 2016 Legislative Agenda: We Want to Hear from You

As we work to identify the key legislative priorities we should focus on in 2016, we want to hear from you:

- What are the main challenges confronting your school?
- What are the major issues impacting the charter sector as a whole?
- What are possible solutions that could help address these areas?

We welcome feedback on these and any other areas of concern you might have, and invite you to send responses to Dan Schaller at [dschaller@coloradoleague.org](mailto:dschaller@coloradoleague.org) or call 303.989.5356 x105.

### League Governmental Affairs Committee

The League's Governmental Affairs Committee, comprised of charter school representatives from across the state as well as other community leaders, held its first meeting of the year in August and has been meeting regularly since. Over the coming months, this group will help the League prepare for and navigate the 2016 legislative session, including helping us map out our 2016 policy agenda. Stay tuned for further details on that agenda, and [click here to see who is serving on this year's committee](#).

### Join the League's Charter Advocacy Corps!

The League is currently working to build out a strong corps of charter school supporters who are committed advocates for charter school issues. Charter school advocates not only support the school they are directly involved with, but the greater charter community as a whole - i.e. all charter school students in Colorado. Our goal is to train and support these advocates when it comes to attending public meetings, speaking with policymakers, testifying at the Capitol, and more. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Corps and what it takes to advocate on behalf of Colorado's charter school students. Also, please share this opportunity with others in your school community. We need people to join today! The next meeting of the Charter Advocacy Corps is Thursday, November 19,

at noon via conference call. Email [dschaller@coloradoleague.org](mailto:dschaller@coloradoleague.org) to learn more.

## Candidate and Elected Official Engagement

The League initiated two new efforts this year aimed at further engaging policymakers and educating them on charter school issues. The first of these was a school board candidate survey we conducted prior to the recently concluded election. We solicited feedback on choice and charters from over 100 candidates in more than 15 districts across the state, and then compiled the results as a resource for the broader K-12 community (view final results [here](#)).

The League also kicked off a series of elected official breakfasts in a number of different locations across the state. The goal of these events is to give elected officials a chance to see a local charter public schools in action and to hear about some of the major topics and trends currently characterizing charter schools across Colorado. The first of these breakfasts took place in September at The Vanguard School in Colorado Springs and Chavez/Huerta K-12 Preparatory Academy in Pueblo. Several more breakfasts are scheduled for Douglas County, Jefferson County and Denver County in the coming weeks. Please contact Dan Schaller to learn more.

## Legislator Outreach

While the League meets regularly with elected officials to highlight and advocate for issues impacting the charter sector, it is far more effective when those same elected officials hear from you! Now that the election is over and there's still time before the 2016 legislative session begins, we strongly encourage you to reach out to elected officials in your area, invite them for a tour of your school, and begin to develop relationships with them. [Click here to find contact information for your elected officials](#). Please let us know if there is anything we can do to assist in your outreach efforts. Legislators enjoy connecting with their constituents and hearing about their successes, so don't miss this opportunity to reach out and show off the great things that make your charter school unique!

## Special Education Transparency and Research

As a result of League-supported legislation that was passed during the 2014 session, districts are now required to provide their charter schools with an itemized accounting of all the special education (SPED) costs they incur along with the basis of any per-pupil SPED charges they impose against their charters (CRS 22-30.5-112(3)(c)). This information is supposed to be provided within 90 days of the conclusion of the prior budget year (September 30), so if you've yet to receive it for the 2014-15 school year, we encourage you to reach out to your authorizer and ask for it today.

Also, we realize how much of a struggle the issue of SPED funding can be, and so the League commissioned a study during the 2014-15 school year to dig further into this topic, to learn what is happening in various districts across the state, and to see where best practices are occurring. The first results of this analysis were released at our Policy and Facility Summit on October 12. If you are interested in the findings, the report can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

## Governor Releases 2016-17 State Budget Proposal

Last week, Governor John Hickenlooper released his proposal for the state's 2016-17 budget. Under the proposal, average per-pupil funding next year would rise to \$7,397 from \$7,284 this year, or an increase of 1.4%. While per-pupil revenue would continue to move in a positive direction, many were discouraged to see that the negative factor would not be kept level and would instead grow by approximately \$50 million, cutting into what many in the K-12 space believe to be rightfully theirs.

The Governor's proposal is just that - a proposal - and many conversations will happen between now and when the state's final budget is set by the legislature in the spring. We will be sure to keep you informed on how conversations unfold in the coming months. Please [click here](#) to read *Chalkbeat Colorado's* article about the Governor's current proposal and the various reactions to it.

## School Leader's Guide to the 2015 Legislative Session

Finally, in case you missed it, the League recently released our annual overview of the previous legislative session entitled [A Charter School Leader's Guide to the 2015 Colorado Legislative Session](#). This Guide is intended to provide an easy-to-read, one-stop document to help you 1) learn about the education-related bills passed in 2015 and 2) understand how these changes directly impact Colorado charter school operations. If you haven't already, we encourage you to take a look so you can be up-to-speed on all the legislative changes that took place last year and how those might impact your school.

Thanks for reading, and we look forward to another successful year working together.

Sincerely,

The League Policy and Advocacy Team

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